



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES - WILDLIFE DIVISION

RUFFED GROUSE AND AMERICAN WOODCOCK COOPERATORS EARLY SEASON REPORT

Early season reports from ruffed grouse and American woodcock cooperators allow biologists to quickly assess hunter success and local field conditions across the state of Michigan at the beginning of grouse season. This report is a summary of their responses for September 15-18, 2006.

Cooperators returned 110 useable surveys. They hunted 574.8 hours in 46 counties during the survey period. Respondents hunted most in Zone 2, followed by Zone 1, and Zone 3. Zone 2 also reported the highest flush rates for grouse and woodcock (Table 1). Individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with the highest flush rates for grouse were Lake, Grand Traverse, Gladwin, and Mackinac (Table 2). Although woodcock season was not open during the survey period, cooperators were asked to also count woodcock flushes. Individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with the highest flush rates for woodcock were Clare, Roscommon, Benzie, and Lake (Table 2).

Nearly half (47%) of the respondents thought grouse populations were up or slightly up from last year in the areas they hunted with 37% reporting populations about the same as the previous year (Table 3). Many (44%) of the respondents thought woodcock populations were the same as last year (Table 3).

Several hunters commented on having hot weather conditions for the first few days. Some hunters reported delayed soft mast production.

Table 1. Ruffed grouse and American woodcock flush rates by zone and year for September 15-18.

Zone:	2005			2006		
	Hours	Grouse / hour	Wood-cock / hour	Hours	Grouse / hour	Wood-cock / hour
1	184.3	1.2	0.6	125.2	1.6	0.2
2	461.9	2.2	1.4	375.1	2.8	1.9
3	85.3	0.6	0.9	74.5	1.3	1.3
State	731.5	1.8	1.1	574.8	2.3	1.5

Table 3. Hunter opinions about ruffed grouse and American woodcock populations.

Trend	Ruffed Grouse		Woodcock	
	2005	2006	2005	2006
Up	5%	16%	4%	11%
Slightly Up	35%	31%	7%	14%
Same	28%	37%	44%	44%
Slightly Down	16%	8%	21%	13%
Down	15%	8%	24%	18%

Table 2. Ruffed grouse and American woodcock flush rates by county for September 15-18, 2006.

County:	Hours:	Grouse / hour:	Wood-cock / hour:
Alcona	2.0	3.0	1.0
Allegan	10.4	1.5	1.6
Alpena	2.0	1.0	0.0
Baraga	2.0	0.0	0.0
Barry	4.8	0.2	0.0
Benzie	18.5	1.0	2.7
Calhoun	0.5	0.0	0.0
Charlevoix	1.9	0.0	0.5
Cheboygan	18.0	1.8	1.2
Clare	15.1	2.8	8.9
Crawford	41.3	2.3	1.2
Delta	10.5	2.0	0.2
Dickinson	14.5	1.2	0.3
Gladwin	18.0	3.3	1.7
Gogebic	22.5	1.0	0.0
Grand Traverse	15.0	3.4	0.6
Gratiot	7.5	0.0	0.0
Houghton	7.0	2.7	1.0
Huron	2.0	0.0	0.0
Iosco	6.0	0.2	0.3
Iron	24.0	1.0	0.3
Isabella	4.5	3.6	3.8
Jackson	5.0	0.0	0.0
Kalkaska	42.5	3.2	1.1
Keweenaw	2.5	0.4	0.0
Lake	53.5	4.7	2.3
Mackinac	18.1	3.2	0.3
Mason	4.6	2.6	5.2
Mecosta	2.0	0.5	4.0
Midland	8.9	0.8	2.0
Missaukee	24.1	3.2	0.2
Montcalm	3.0	0.3	2.0
Montmorency	18.0	2.4	1.1
Newaygo	17.0	3.1	0.5
Oakland	2.0	0.0	0.0
Oceana	2.0	0.0	1.5
Ogemaw	3.0	2.0	1.7
Ontonagon	24.1	1.7	0.0
Osceola	24.9	2.2	1.1
Oscoda	22.6	1.2	1.5
Otsego	6.0	3.0	1.3
Presque Isle	4.3	2.4	0.5
Roscommon	24.5	3.1	4.1
Sanilac	3.5	0.3	7.4
Tuscola	3.4	0.0	0.0
Wexford	7.6	3.0	2.0